11: Kennan--212-213 T-3 (1865) 1870 Koryak-1-2
116, 731, 756, 786 Reindeer

"The duties of the Shamáns or priests among the Koraks are, to make incantations over the sick, to hold communication with the evil spirits, and to interpret their wishes and decrees to man. Whenever any calamity, such as disease, storm, or famine comes upon a band, it is of course attributed to some spirit's displeasure, and the Shamán is consulted as to the best method of appeasing his wrath. The priest to whom application is made assembles the people in one of the largest tents of the encampment, puts on a long robe marked with fantastic figures of birds and beasts and curious hieroglyphic emblems, unbinds his long black hair, and taking up a large native drum, begins to sing in a subdued voice to the accompaniment of slow, steady drum-beats. As the song progresses it increases in energy and rapidity, the priest's eyes seem to become fixed, he contorts his body as if in spasms, and increases the vehemence of his wild chant until the drum-beats make one continuous roll. Then, springing to his feet and jerking his head convulsively until his long hair fairly snaps, he begins a frantic dance about the tent, and finally sinks apparently exhausted into his seat. In a few moments he delivers to the awe-stricken natives the message which he has received from the evil spirits, and which [213] consists generally of an order to sacrifice a certain number of dogs or reindeer, or perhaps a man, to the offended deities.

In these wild incantations the priests sometimes practise all sorts of frauds upon their credulous followers, by pretending to swallow live coals and to pierce their bodies with knives; but, in a majority of instances, the Shamán seems to actually believe that he is

under the control and guidance of diabolical intelligence. The natives themselves, however, seem to doubt occasionally the priest's pretended inspiration, and whip him severely to test the sincerity of his professions and the genuineness of his revelations. If his fortitude sustains him under the infliction without any exhibition of human weakness or suffering, his authority as a minister of the evil spirits is vindicated, and his commands obeyed."